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As with other forms of social life, leisure practices are directly influenced by the social, cultural, political, and economic features of their era. In the globalized, late modern times in which we live, many forms of consumer leisure experiences are increasingly being driven and shaped by highly sophisticated and rationalized processes that have been influenced by principles developed in the corporate world. This chapter explains a particular theoretical framework called *Disneyization* to examine how some leisure experiences are constructed from discernable principles. Disneyization's principal argument is that the characteristics of consumption, initially exhibited in Disney theme parks, are becoming increasingly pervasive in broader society; a myriad of consumer experiences now incorporate performed, themed narratives that adhere to a defined script. What distinguishes Disneyized arrangements from other, perhaps less institutionalized forms of leisure, is that consumers can 'eat, play, and shop' in the same 'storied' location; everything needed to have a 'good time' is found in one place.

According to Bryman (2004), Disneyization has five distinguishing features. First, there is *theming,* which refers to how an overall narrative can imbue an experience. Irish pubs, which seem to exist in every major airport and big city, are an example of this. Second, is *hybrid consumption*, which entails the buying of merchandise, food and drink while being engaged in the actual leisure activity. *Merchandising*, the third feature, is strongly linked to hybrid consumption, as branded goods are often available for purchase at the leisure facility/venue. The fourth feature is *performative labour*, whereby employees who interact with the public, follow scripts that govern much of what they say and how they act. The final aspect refers to how the provision of experiences may be *controlled* and accompanied by a high level of *surveillance*.

This chapter explores the degree to which a variety of leisure experiences can be considered to be within the purview of Disneyization. The analysis continues with a discussion of the implications of Disneyization and how it shapes the provision and ensuing experiences of leisure in the 21st century.

Leisure and Consumption

Our interest in the relationship between consumption and leisure experiences follows a longstanding tradition, with Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (originally published in 1899) being an early examination of how displays of leisure time activities/interests were used as markers of social status. Veblen asserted that displays of wealth were exhibited through "conspicuous

leisure" (2007, p. 35). Veblen's work provided an insight into how leisure practices served to confer social status upon individuals through public consumption. The modern iteration of this trend continues with displays of wealth exhibited in a myriad of ways. These range from attending exclusive wine tasting events to buying adventure holidays in 'exotic' locations, and then using social media to convey these images to a wider audience.

More recently, Stebbins (2009) has made a distinction between consumption and leisure to avoid unnecessary conflation of these terms. He argues that consumption "is to *have* something, to possess it, whereas the end of leisure is to *do* something, to engage in a positive activity" (p. ix). He does, however, acknowledge that "there are times when consumption and leisure are so closely aligned as to make it impossible to distinguish the two in this way" (p. ix). We concur with this point and in this chapter we focus on how rationalized forms of consumption shape how leisure participants (consumers) experience leisure activities. For Stebbins (2013), leisure consumption is when the having (consumption) and the doing (leisure) occur at the same time: it is leisure itself that is being consumed. Our focus is very much on the commercial provision of leisure services (e.g., indoor rock-climbing, bowling alleys) that exist to facilitate a leisure experience, rather than the acquisition of a tangible material product that might be purchased to facilitate a leisure experience (e.g., a fishing rod, kayak or guitar).

Social Context

As mentioned earlier, leisure practices are heavily influenced by the social circumstances of their times. It is no coincidence that the relatively new theoretical framework of Disneyization (Brymer first published a paper on it in 1999) emerged at a time of rapid global change and development. The internet was emerging as part and parcel of everyday life, it became normal for people to communicate by email and mobile phones, and air travel became relatively inexpensive. This era in which we still inhabit is what Giddens (1991) calls *late modernity*, and is characterized by fast-paced lifestyles, cosmopolitanism, high tech communications, global mobility, constantly evolving technology, and the diminishing 'grand narrative' (Elliot & Urry, 2010; Young, DaRosa, & Lapointe, 2011). A grand narrative refers to elements of society that many people used to take for granted as 'right' or desirable, like going to university, getting a job for life, being married to someone of the opposite sex, or the desirability of settling down in the suburbs.

While our social worlds are indeed characterized by constant change (just think of how often you have to update your software on your various devices), they are also characterized by an obsession with risk minimization and avoiding

preventable harm (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Beck, 1992), whether it be physical, emotional or financial. Despite perceptions that risks from pandemics and terrorism lurk around every corner, research indicates that in global terms, people today are much healthier and live much longer than those at any point in history (Roser, 2015). Still, humans today seem to worry increasingly about how to manage both personal and public risk (Elliot, 2014). Bauman (2007) describes this ever-changing contemporary life as 'liquid times', where nothing is fixed and humans are dealing with constant insecurity and uncertainty.

What does constant change and uncertainty have to do with the consumption of leisure? Drawing on Bryman's Disneyization hypothesis, we argue that leisure practices have responded to the general 'busyness' and fast pace of life by becoming increasingly predictable, controllable, and efficient.

Weber and rationalization

While our primary focus is on Disneyization (Bryman, 1999, 2004), which we explain in more detail below, it is important to see how this theoretical framework is located within a tradition of sociological inquiry that is concerned with how societies are structured and how people make meaning of their lives. Bryman's ideas extend Ritzer's work on McDonaldization (1983), which drew its inspiration from the German sociologist Max Weber, whose most well known book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905/2001), laid the foundations for examining the "processes of rationalization, bureaucratization and resulting disenchantment that he associated with industrialization and the rise of capitalist societies" (Varley, 2013, p. 35).

Weber (1905/2001) was particularly interested in the changes wrought by industrialization on the lives of individuals. This happened, he argued, through the application of technical and scientific approaches, initially used to enhance production of goods, to all aspects of peoples' lives. One of Weber's principal motives was to stress the interplay between modes of production (Marx's focus) and the cultural influences that underpinned the rise of industrialized society (Roberts, 2012). Weber referred to this nexus as the "rationalism of Western culture" (p. 26).

Varley (2013) has suggested that the pervasiveness of rationality as a guiding principle in modern life has tended towards the "elimination of emotion, spontaneity, randomness and surprise" (p. 36). This is not to say that individuals do not experience a range of emotions; rather, the rise of rationalized leisure activities in the form of adventure tourism (e.g., bungy jumping, white water rafting) epitomizes the "experience economy" (Varley, 2013, p. 38), which heavily shapes the types of emotions that one might experience. For example,

Holyfield's (1999) article on white water rafting, *Manufacturing adventure: The buying and selling of emotions,* provides an insightful analysis of the interaction between service providers and consumers as they co-construct specific and desirable affective states. For example, Holyfield identified 'scripts' that raft guides adhered to on certain sections of the river to arouse participants' emotions. They might tell a story of a previous 'incident' or use hyperbole to deliberately raise participants' anxiety levels about the big 'drop', wave, or 'hole' that was around the next bend.

Adventure tourism is a significant contributor to the tourism industry in many countries (e.g., New Zealand, Costa Rica). One of the hallmarks of any 'industry' is the application of rationalization, and this is evidenced by the increasing rise of bureaucratic processes that enforce conformity, such as industry-wide standards, accreditation bodies and regulatory control by government agencies. The growth of modern industrialized societies has been based on scientific-technical rationality that has permeated beyond the boundaries of production into many aspects of social life. Indicators of this rationality are observable in most sectors of human life, whether they be packaged holidays, standardized testing of educational achievement, social media campaigns to influence personal behavior such a diet and sexual practices, or the amalgamation of small shops into 'mega-stores' to improve efficiency. While Weber's work was not without his critics (e.g., Habermas, 1989), it provided the platform upon which the American sociologist George Ritzer would develop his McDonaldization thesis.

Ritzer and McDonaldization

Ritzer argued that the McDonald's fast-food franchise provided an exemplary model of the process of rationalization of goods and services on a global scale. He defined McDonaldization as

> The process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world. McDonaldization affects not only the restaurant business but also education, work, health care, travel, leisure, dieting, politics, the family and virtually every other aspect of society. (2001, p. 198)

Ritzer's thesis is more than merely an explanation of what the consumer gets when they buy a hamburger or a leisure experience. He posited that broader cultural, ideological and economic circumstances were forcing businesses to rationalize their products and services in order to decrease costs and increase profits. The McDonaldization framework outlines how companies are focusing on increasing the efficiency, predictability, calculability, control of the products they are selling, while replacing human labour with technology wherever

possible (Ritzer, 1983). In the section below, we briefly outline the key points related to the five elements of Ritzer's framework.

First, the drive for efficiency focuses on achieving an intended outcome with the least cost (material and/or labour). For example, a ski rental company can maximize profitability by buying 'all-round' skis with easy to maintain and fast to adjust bindings that will accommodate customers of varying abilities and boot sizes. Therefore, the ski shop does not have to spend a lot of time 'fitting' clients according to their individual needs.

The second feature is calculability, or the increasing emphasis that is placed on quantifying operations. In many cases, this is reflected by valuing quantity over quality or longevity. Thus, the ski rental shop might buy a large number of skis on a discounted bulk order in the knowledge that any damaged ones will not be repaired, as it will be cheaper to replace them than pay for the parts and labour. Calculability is driven by cost–benefit analyses, rather than issues of environmental impact (e.g., disposing of partially damaged skis) or the labour conditions under which the workers are employed to produce low cost items.

The third feature of the McDonaldization framework is predictability. A company can lose income through unexpected events, and so will try to control as many factors as possible in order to minimize disruption to production or sales. Customers also desire predictability and have an expectation that they will receive what they paid for (e.g., a Big Mac looks and tastes the same in Manchester as it does in Toronto). In order to keep events and occurrences as predictable as possible, a business might do everything it can to ensure that factors, such as the weather and the economy, have as little influence on profits as possible. In regards to the ski hire business, one approach might be to have an indoor ski slope or to provide alternative activities for bad weather days (e.g., a café, indoor rock-climbing wall, or mountain bike rental). Thus an income stream is guaranteed irrespective of the weather.

Control, the fourth feature, refers to the manner in which a business has influence over the behavior and actions of its employees and customers. For example, customers at the ski rental shop may have a limited choice of what is on offer (e.g., they may only be able to choose between two makes of ski, or may only be permitted to ski on specific slopes). Control is also exerted upon the employees, in terms of how they are expected to dress, conduct their tasks, and interact with customers. Often, employees are given clearly defined codes of conduct to follow, and may not be expected (nor permitted) to exercise anything but very limited judgment. Standard operating procedures will stipulate how an activity is to be conducted. Another example of this deference to controlling

policies is the dutiful pool attendant who adheres to a prescribed way of acting by prohibiting aqua-jogging in swimming lanes, even when they are empty.

The final feature of McDonaldization is the substitution of non-human technology for tasks that might have been previously completed by people. For example ski passes contain an electronic chip that permits entry on to lifts, which removed the need for staff to check passes, while some indoor rock-climbing centres use automated belaying devices that "completely remove human involvement in what was once an integral component of climbing" (Beames & Brown, 2014, p. 120).

Ritzer's development of McDonaldization as an analytic framework has highlighted how Weber's seminal work on rationalization continues to permeate aspects of contemporary life across a wide range of contexts. In regards to leisure experiences, Ritzer (2004) has argued that, rather than being an alternative to the rationalization of daily life, recreation and leisure have merely become an extension of it. Having briefly outlined some of the background relating to rationalizing processes, our attention now turns to Disneyization as a further explanatory approach in our analysis of the provision of leisure experiences in contemporary western society.

Bryman and Disneyization

Just as Ritzer's usage of the term McDonaldization applied to a process of rationalization that extended beyond the production of hamburgers, Bryman has argued that Disney theme parks are "emblematic of certain trends" in studies of consumerism (2004, p. vii). Disneyization refers to the adoption of the principles underpinning the operation of Disney's parks across diverse sectors of society, and can be viewed "as a complementary notion to McDonaldization" (Bryman, 1999, p. 25).

It is important to distinguish Disneyization from the concept of Disneyfication, which involves transforming "an object into something superficial and simplistic" (Bryman, 2004, p. 5). Disneyfication involves reformulating an existing story or fairy tale into a standardized, sanitized format that will have mass appeal to a global audience. Bryman refined his original 1999 Disneyization framework for his 2004 book, and we will refer to his five defining characteristics by their more recent names: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, performative labour, and control and surveillance.

Theming is common in a range of leisure settings. For example, restaurants such as the Hard Rock Café, where diners are immersed in the sights and sounds of all things rock and roll, or the proliferation of Irish or English pubs are further

illustrations of this trend. A crucial concept within theming is that the various elements of the experience have a high degree of coherency: the décor, the name of the dish, the employees' attire, the music. The consumer is made to feel they have been transported to that era or place.

The second characteristic of Disneyization is *hybrid consumption* (formerly known as the 'de-differentiation of consumption'). This can be understood as the blurring of lines between partaking in a leisure experience (e.g., rafting or a music concert) and purchasing material objects (e.g., a t-shirt, photo, poster, CD). Put simply, it is mixing 'doing' and 'buying'. For example, while at Legoland there are many opportunities to purchase Lego products in-between rides. A key point here is that different forms of consumption (e.g. playing, eating, drinking, and buying souvenirs) are "inextricably interwoven" (Bryman, 1999, p. 34). Hybridity encourages consumption of goods and services that might not initially be the prime driver of participation.

Bryman's third feature is *merchandising*, which is strongly related to hybrid consumption. If you have been to a Starbucks café, you will know that there are also many types of branded products for sale. These include bags of coffee, French presses, CDs, mugs, cups, and flasks that are all available for purchase. These are often placed adjacent to where one waits for the coffee to arrive. Music concert promoters often provide opportunities to buy special event merchandise (e.g., tour t-shirt or limited edition release), while professional sports teams (e.g., Manchester United or The All Blacks) also have an extensive range of branded merchandise that is available when attending a game (as well as online and through retail stores). Bryman (1999) has suggested that in some businesses it is the merchandising that provides a stream of revenue that matches or exceeds that from the principal activity.

The fourth feature of Disneyization is *performative labour* (termed 'emotional labour' in his 1999 paper). As Ritzer (1998) highlighted in his work on 'McJobs', these forms of employment usually need a restricted range of skills, demand little independent decision-making, and require the expression of certain emotions and specific ways of interacting with customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). Performative labour involves employees exhibiting "cheerfulness and friendliness towards customers as part of the service encounter" (Bryman, 1999, p. 39).

The final aspect that Bryman included in his 2004 iteration of Disneyization is *control and the ensuing surveillance of staff and customers*. Bryman asserts that control (viewed here in conjunction with 'surveillance') differs from McDonaldized forms of control in that

> it is more of an *enabling* one rather than an aspect of it *per se*. Control and surveillance permit Disneyization in the form of the four dimensions outlined to operate to its full capacity. In other words, without control, theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labour are less likely to be effective. (Bryman, 2004, p. 131)

Ritzer's study of control in McDonald's restaurants (e.g., the division of labour, how food is produced) lies at the heart of this feature. While Bryman acknowledges that control and surveillance are analytically different, in Disneyization they merge into one another. He explains that surveillance is both "a means of checking that control procedures are working as well as being a control device in its own right" (Bryman, 2004, p. 132). Control and surveillance extends to both staff and consumers. For example, when visiting the cinema, customers are corralled and directed through the confectionary shop, and the preview area for new releases, before entering the designated theatre. Likewise, CCTV footage in many leisure settings (e.g., swimming pools, bungy jumping operations) serves the dual purpose of providing a sense of security and also monitoring staff working practices.

We'll now put all five features of Bryman's Disneyization framework to work by using them to interrogate one 'mega-leisure centre'. Although deeper empirical work in this vein has been done in other papers (see Beames & Varley, 2013; Beames & Brown, 2014), we wanted to show how it can be applied to an operation that we haven't visited and which is located in a part of the world that is unfamiliar to us.

We chose to conduct a brief analysis *Ski Dubai* — a ski slope located inside one of the largest shopping malls in the world, that is located in what was once the desert. Ski Dubai boasts 22,500m2 of skiable terrain, with five runs of up to 400m long.

Bryman's first feature of Disneyization is theming, and the ski operator's promotional literature says as much in its claim to having 'an amazing mountain-themed wintery setting'. Further theming is evident by the names given to its two restaurants: the St. Moritz Café and the Avalanche Café. This type of theming was also a feature of indoor ski slopes in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Hybrid consumption is facilitated by the 'Snow Pro' retail shop and, perhaps more obviously, by the fact that the entire indoor ski hill is located within one of the biggest shopping malls in the world. While at the hill, there is plenty to do when not skiing or snowboarding, such as tobogganing, drinking hot chocolate in minus four temperatures, 'sight seeing' from the quad chairlift, playing in the

3000m2 Snow Cavern, riding the Snow Bullet zipwire, and observing (and even swimming with) real penguins who live in a special enclosure.

Merchandising is rampant — both on the part of Ski Dubai and other retail outlets who are hoping to cash-in on the Ski Dubai's brand recognition. Branded products such as baseball hats, mugs, fridge magnets, hooded sweatshirts, t-shirts, and wall clocks, are all on offer.

We can't accurately assess the level of performative labour, since we've never been to Ski Dubai, but there is a 'team of professional Ski School instructors will guide you through the simple, fun process of learning to ski or snowboard'. We would speculate, however, that staff are immaculately presented and convey only the friendliest and most positive emotions. Comments such as 'Very helpful and kind staff at the counter' on the Ski Dubai Facebook page suggest that this is the case. The Indeed.com website shares a quote from a Ski Dubai employee who states: 'I have learned how to interact and associate with almost all nationalities'. In our earlier study of indoor ski slopes, we found that the front of house staff and lift operators demonstrated the easy-going demeanor typical of more traditional outdoor ski slope staff. Dress, language and mannerisms were transferred from the mountain to the 'factory floor' — for this is after all is an industry.

Bryman's fifth feature of control and surveillance is also difficult to comment on. Presumably there are the usual, ubiquitous 'security cameras'. It is, however, made clear in the terms and conditions, a) that all guests bags have the right to be searched, and b) Ski Dubai may share your personal details with other companies. Control and surveillance also operates in less obvious ways than 'control towers' or CCTV cameras. For example, positioning the bar or restaurant over looking the ski slope creates an atmosphere of constant surveillance from both other staff members and paying clientele.

In addition to Bryman's five features of Disneyization, we found that the influence of social media loomed large. The ubiquity of media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram is evident, as physical and virtual visitors alike are encouraged to 'stay connected' to the organization, lest they miss out on something fun. People are also urged to tell their friends that they're going to Ski Dubai (and are really looking look to it) or that they went (and had a great time).

Source: http://www.theplaymania.com/skidubai/about-us

Discussion

Our objective with this analysis is not to definitively state that a given leisure operation is either Disneyized or not. Rather, it is through the rigorous employment of a theoretical framework such as Bryman's, that we can move beyond the kind of discussion that might take place in a café to a more precise academic interrogation of existing social conditions.

Our examination of Ski Dubai has direct links to ideas that Lindner was exploring almost half a century ago in his book, *The Harried Leisure Class* (1970). Linder's central thesis was that the 'nature' of leisure experiences mirror broader societal trends; as the pace of life in modern western societies quickens, so too does the way we consume leisure. Linder suggested that working time and consumption time both become more productive when combined with capital. Drawing on Lindner's work, Scott (2013) explains that

> Given the glut of goods and services that people can afford in contemporary societies, it becomes highly problematic to devote sufficient time to them all. Members of the harried leisure class are constantly reminded that time is scarce. A feeling of time scarcity results in people's striving to increase the yield on time. (p. 114)

Members of the "harried leisure class" are ideal targets for what Edwards and Corte (2010) call "mass market commercialization" (p. 1135). The widespread appetite for predictable, safe, stress-free fun seems to thrive in one-stop leisure centres. These can be regarded as "synthetic visions", as they provide a "simplified, sanitized experience that stands in for the more undisciplined complexities of the city" (Sorkin, 1992, p. 208).

With these newer leisure centres, place is "dispersed into a sea of universal placelessness" (p. 217), as they completely ignore local socio-cultural and geo-physical phenomena. Increasingly, outdoor leisure practices traditionally done outdoors, such as rock climbing, are becoming "indoorised" (see van Bottenburg & Salome, 2010). Contemporary leisure can be practiced anywhere and without any engagement to local culture and landscape.

Conclusions and implications

The ideas within the McDonaldization and Disneyization frameworks are not new *per se*, and are not immune to criticism (see Alfino, Caputo, & Wynyard, 1998). The journey of these ideas being organized into conceptual frameworks can arguably be seen itself as a reflection of a "series of rationalization processes that had been occurring throughout the twentieth century" (Ritzer, 2004, p. 39).

What is becoming apparent is that 'public spheres' are becoming more and more commodified, and has this shift takes place the capacity for social actors in these spheres is increasingly constrained (Roberts, 2005).

Whether you accept the Disneyization framework in its entirety, or aspects of it, is almost beside the point. It is arguably more important to recognise that discernible patterns in the provision of leisure experiences are emerging across the globe. We contend that the most noteworthy of these is the advent of commercial leisure sites that combine 'doing' with 'purchasing', where one can combine eating, playing, and shopping while interacting with others. These Disneyized leisure experiences are based on a commercial transaction, where a customer buys a series of experiences that can be quantified, reliably delivered and replicated day-after-day.

The provision of leisure as a 'product' results in a transfer of responsibility from the consumer to the supplier. For example, if I wish to paddle a grade 5 river, I can spend time, money and personal effort acquiring the necessary skills, experience and judgment to plan and undertake my own trip. Alternatively, I can pay a commercial rafting company to guide me down the river in one of their craft, where an experienced guide is responsible for my safety. If I take the second option, I remove the necessity to undergo an apprenticeship and can do lots of thrilling activities in a short holiday timeframe (e.g., rafting, bungy jumping, sky-diving). If I took the first option, I would have fewer opportunities to experience lots of different activities, as time and effort are required to build the necessary skills. I might, however, build a strong social network with like-minded enthusiasts; develop an appreciation of wild places as I build my skills on progressively more difficult rivers; and possibly undergo some form of personal transformation through gaining mastery and taking responsibility for my actions.

Our exploration of rationalization in the provision of leisure experiences leads us to ask: How do these changing social arrangements shape how leisure is experienced and how do these arrangements advantage some people and disadvantage others?

We find ourselves in broad agreement with Bryman's Disneyization and Ritzer's McDonaldization frameworks. They explain many of the nuances of social relations in contemporary society and they provide useful lenses for thinking more deeply about many 'taken-for-granted' leisure practices. While we have used the Disneyization and McDonaldization frameworks to cast a critical eye on educational practices (see Beames & Brown, 2014), who are we to decree whether or not it is wrong for people to have a Disneyized leisure experience? Indeed, operations like Ski Dubai are positioned as family experiences, where

people can come for the day to have fun together in a manner that makes them feel happy, safe, worry-free, and without hassle.

We do, however, have reservations about the environmental and social damage Disneyization potentially conceals behind a veil of fun and pleasure. The nature of part-time and casual employment contracts coupled with low pay rates for service workers, impacts negatively on employees and their communities. In addition, the demands that running a Disneyized leisure operation place upon the local (and distant) ecosystems that host and provide energy is almost too complex and large to fathom. Drawing on Giroux (1999), Roberts (2005) argues that "questioning Disney is as much about keeping a critical eye on the social forces of commercialization and its effects on real lives as it is about deconstructing the iconic meaning of a Mouse" (p. 23). When viewed in this critical light, there is a moral imperative for leisure studies scholars and students to question the economic arrangements of given social situations in ways that might reveal how some people (and living beings) are being advantaged, while others are being disadvantaged.

If we accept the proposition that leisure experiences add value to individuals to and communities, then an informed debate on the nature of leisure provision is vital, otherwise there is the risk of inadvertently perpetuating social inequalities. The challenge confronting leisure studies scholars is to continue refining analytic frameworks in order to better understand and address the needs of human beings in a rapidly changing world.

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